
Dr. *ALTHAM*'s

S E R M O N

Before the HONOURABLE

House of Commons

JANUARY 16th 17¹¹/₁₂.

PAUL JORDAN

Chaplain to the House of Commons

Jovis 17. die Jan. 1711.

Order'd,

THAT the Thanks of this House be Given
Dr. *Altham*, for the Sermon by Him
Preached before this House Yesterday at St. *Margaret's Westminster*; And that He be Desir'd to
Print the Same; And that Sir *Gilbert Dolben*, Mr.
Gore, and Mr. *Annesley* do Acquaint him there-
with.

PAUL JODRELL,
Cl. Dom. Com.

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S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the Honourable

House of Commons

At the Church of St. Margaret Westminster,

O N

W E D N E S D A Y, Jan. 16. 17th₁₂.

Being the

F A S T - D A Y

F O R A

General P E A C E.

By ROGER ALTHAM, D. D. *K*
Rector of St. *Buttolph's* without *Bishop-Gate*.

L O N D O N,

Printed for Geo. Strahan at the Golden-Ball over against
the Royal-Exchange, Cornhill, 1712.



1 Pet. iii. ver. 10, 11.

For he that will love Life and see good Days, let him refrain his Tongue from Evil, and his Lips that they speak no Guile.

Let him eschew Evil and do Good, let him seek Peace and ensue it.

IF Devotion be a fix'd and constant Intention of the Will to perform all those Duties and Observances which Religion binds us too, amongst all its noble Train of Attendance there is not any one Duty more effectually Subservient to it, than is That which we are this Day commanded to perform.

For the Duty of Humiliation, whether we consider it as it respects God, or as it has a Relation to our own selves, is in the Effects of it so full of Divine Comfort, that however the Acts of it may seem Afflictive or Troublesome, yet may we reasonably expect the Issue of it to be Joy and Peace in the Lord.

For in respect of God Almighty there is not any one single Duty of Religion that can produce
such

such extraordinary Instances of its prevailing Power with God as this can. We may remember a wicked *Ninive*, and an *Ahab* more Wicked than the whole City, though they had Sinn'd in all appearance beyond Mercy, could yet by this one Duty of Humiliation, be able to wrest Divine Vengeance out of God's Hands, when He seem'd Irrevocably to have pronounced it against them.

In Relation to our selves, when we consider that the great End of *Christianity* is to Elevate and Improve our Nature (as far as Flesh and Blood is capable) to that Perfection, we hope more perfectly to enjoy in another State, where even our Bodies shall arise Spiritual Bodies, there is no Duty can better recommend it self to us than this of Humiliation, which is represented to us as that which Subdues, Kills, and Crucifies those rebellious, slavish Lusts and Corruptions, which are the only Hindrances to us in our Endeavours after that Perfection.

Since therefore these Instances seem purposely recorded by God Almighty for our Encouragement to this Duty, and these Advantages may be sensibly Experimented by every Devout *Christian* in the Exercise of it, I shall endeavour upon this Occasion to shew you.

First, The Necessity and Advantage of the Duty. And then,

Secondly, The particular Ends and Reasons for our Exercise of it at this time.

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The Foundation of the Duty of Humiliation is built upon the Supposition of God Almighty's Over-ruling and All-directing Providence; we therefore humble our selves, that our Sins and Offences against God may not become an Obstacle to those Influential Blessings we expect from it. The Subject Matter of this Humiliation is fully expressed in the Words of the Text, for all our Offences are discover'd either in Word or Deed. Therefore he who knows how to *refrain his Tongue from Evil, and his Lips that they speak no Guile. He who can eschew evil things, and do good ones.* He is the Man who truly loves Life, may see Good Days, may seek for Peace and ensue it.

The Words are quoted by St. Peter from the 34th Psalm, and as the Expositors observe, the Psalmist there, according to the Carnal Dispensation of the Jews, extends them no further than as Rules conducive to the Blessings and Happiness of this Life, but the Apostle enlarges their Comprehension and makes them the Foundation of Happiness both here and hereafter. According to this Sense of them, and as they are thus the Matter of our Humiliation, I shall treat of that Duty.

First, As to the Necessity and Advantage of it in general.

Secondly, As to the particular Ends and Reasons for our Exercise of it at this time. *First* then we must consider.

The Necessity and Advantage of the Duty of Humiliation in general.

The *Jews* had their Solemn Appointed Times for afflicting their Souls, and humbling themselves before God; and their Fasts we find were grown into such a Superstition, as stood in need of the Reformation of our Saviour; for when the Pharisees objected to His Disciples the Neglect of this Duty, His Answer was, This is not the Time of Fasting, *But the Days shall come when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and in those Days they shall fast.*

Though therefore our Saviour does not give us any positive Precept absolutely determining the time, when, yet does He give us such Directions for the Exercise of this Duty, as do plainly infer a Necessity of doing it at some time or other. Thus *Matt. vi. v. 16, 17, 18. When ye fast be not as the Hypocrites of a sad Countenance, for they disfigure their Faces that they may appear unto Men to fast. Verily I say unto you they have their Reward. But thou when thou fastest anoint thine Head and wash thy Face, that thou appear not unto Men to fast but unto thy Father Which is in secret, and thy Father Which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

Now this plainly supposes a Necessity of doing it at some time or other, and that Necessity arises from the very Nature of the Duty it self, and when rightly comply'd with does bring its Advantages along with it. So in the same Chapter our Saviour's

Saviour's Precept for the Duties of Prayer and Almsgiving, contains only suitable Directions for the Exercise of them, upon the Supposition of an antecedent Necessity arising from the very Nature of the Duties themselves, which for instance may be thus discover'd.

From a due Sense of Humane Indigence, join'd with the Consideration of God's Bounty and All-sufficiency, do necessarily result the Duties of Prayer and Almsgiving: For what Reasonable Creature is there who can compare his own Indigence with the All-sufficiency of an Almighty Being, but must necessarily become a Suppliant to it! What compassionate Creature is there who can consider his own Indigence reliev'd by an Almighty Bounty, and not think himself at the same time necessarily oblig'd, according to his Proportion, to derive the same Bounty upon the Indigence of another.

Thus also is it, that from a due Sense of our own Sins and Imperfections, join'd with the Consideration of God's Justice and Mercy, does necessarily arise the Duty of Humiliation: For where there can be no Justification admitted, as in this Case of Sin and Imperfection on our Side, and Almighty Justice on His, there is nothing can interpose to save the Sinner, but only Submission on the one hand, and Mercy on the other.

Nay so absolutely necessary is the Duty of Humiliation, upon this One joint Consideration of
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God's Justice and our Sin, that it is the Ground-work of that Reconciliation which our Saviour wrought for us. The very Foundation of His Mediatorial Kingdom. For He was forc'd to make submission for us, before He could be admitted our Mediator; He humbled Himself with Fasting, Weeping, and Praying. He humbled Himself with all the Austerities of a severe Life; He humbled Himself for us Miserable Sinners unto Death, nay even unto the Death of the Cross.

If then the Doctrine of Humiliation in its general Principle as it imports a Submission to God's Justice, and by that means an Application to His Mercy, was thus necessary to the great Work of an Universal Reconciliation between Sinful Mankind, and an Offended Just God; How much more must it and all the Acts of it become all our Concern, in the Application of that Universal Redemption to our selves.

This may be sufficient to shew us the high Necessity of this Duty, and withal that the great Advantage we are to expect from it, must depend upon the Submissive Part of it: For if we should, as some do, advance voluntary Afflictions as adequate Penalties to our Demerits, and thereby think to make ourselves our own Judges, in this Case we not only affront the Infinity of God's Justice; but do despise also those Merits of our Saviour, which when the Sinful Creature was incapable of doing, came in to make a Satisfaction for us.

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It is not therefore the Afflictive, but the submissive Part of this Duty which gives us the Advantage of it, and that we may the better know what that Submission is, we must Consider; that the state of Man fall'n under Sin is generally represented throughout the whole Scriptures under the Character of Rebellion, which in its Notion implies not only a Defection from our Duty, but an Opposition too to that Power, to which we ought to have submitted.

By this means we become guilty not only of the Omission of our Duty, but of Grievous Commisions also. This Guilt makes us become Obnoxious to Justice, which when we find to be Omnipotent, we are easily made sensible, that we can no more withstand than we can avoid it. Under this Condition an easy consideration will represent to us, the Heinousness of our past Sins, and the Greatness of the Danger we are led into by them.

If then there be any Ingenuity on the one side, or any sense of Danger on the other, either one, or both of these Principles, must lead us into such an Afflictive Sorrow for our past Offences as will cast us low at the Feet of Mercy. They will make us with the Returning Prodigal say, Father I have Sinn'd against Heaven, and against Thee, and am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son, but yet give me Leave to be thy Servant still, tho' one of the meanest of thy Hired Servants. And if this

Sorrow be Real and Sincere, it will naturally lead us into such an Hearty Resolution, as will make us Eschew the Evils pass'd, and produce in us a Real Conversion unto God, and Goodness. It will convince us, that 'tis absolutely necessary we should submit our selves to that Power which we find we cannot with Security, nay with Impunity Affront.

This therefore is that Submission which the Duty of Humiliation ought to bring us to, and these the Means by which it must be compass'd. Were we indeed to deal with Justice only, the Frankness of a Confession would be so far from acquitting, that it would rather enhance our Guilt and hasten our Condemnation; but with the Lord there is Mercy, therefore shall he be fear'd. Justice may be a Dread and Terror to us, but Mercy turns it into an Awful and Reverential Fear.

We know that God Almighty in his Nature is a Placable Being, and we cannot consider him under that Relative Notion of a Creator, much less as a Redeemer, without considering at the same time that comfortable Tie between them, his Divine Philanthropy, his Kindness to his Creature.

Though therefore we have Sinn'd, yet we may consider we have an Advocate with the Father even *Jesus* Christ the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins, the Universal Satisfaction of that Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World

World, is our only safeguard against Almighty Justice, and the continual Intercession of that Advocate recommend our submissions, when sincere, to Gods Mercy; Thus is it that the submissive part of the Duty of Humiliation, and that only, becomes acceptable to God Almighty. And we have great Reason to think the Duty Advantageous to us, when we find this light Affliction, for a season is thus able to procure for us an exceeding and Eternal Weight of Glory. But again,

Secondly. The Duty of Humiliation is not only Necessary for, and Advantageous to us, as it is a Submission to Gods Justice, and by that means an Application to his Mercy. But is also further Necessary for us and Advantageous to us; as it is the best Guard we can have upon our selves against Future Sins; and consequently against Future Provocations.

For if we consider, that the Breach of our first Covenant arose from the Neglect of that Guard, which ought to have secur'd our Soul against the Motions of the Lower Faculties, which could then only Sollicite but do now seem to Command, we cannot certainly but think it highly Necessary to redouble our Cares now, to set a strict Watch upon our selves, to suspect every Motion of the Flesh, and to Reject even many Innocent Gratifications, rather than admit one which may again betray us into the Breach of our Covenant.

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This is the Foundation of that Duty which we call Mortification, which is much mistaken by those who think it a Penance for past Sins, for that must be Inflicted by God alone, who is our only Judge, but yet I think we may well account it, the best Recommendation we have through the Merits of Christ, to Gods Mercy for our Sins past, and the best Guard we can have upon our selves against the Commission of them for the Future.

For self Denial, a great Ingredient of it, is, the most Reasonable and prudent Rule we can walk by; the Boundaries of Good and Evil lie very near, and he who allows himself in all the Liberty that he thinks Innocent, walks upon a dangerous Precipice, where the least slip may throw him into irrecoverable Ruin. He who advances to the utmost Limits of what is Lawful, ought to Consider that the next step carries him beyond his Line, and if he duly weigh the Hazard of the Combat, as *St. Paul* always describes it between the Flesh and the Spirit, He will find the Enemy so Powerful so Cunning, that a little Prudence will easily direct him to a cautious and wary Retreat, as his only Guard and Security.

In this Posture of Defence while he does not suffer the Adversary to approach too near him, he may easily Countermines the φρόνημα σαρκός the Subtle and Powerful Insinuations
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of the Flesh, with its Lusts and Affections. He will be free from all that Hurry and disturbance of Mind, which growing Passions are apt to throw Men into, and being by this calmness render'd Capable of judging things distinctly, He may at that Distance discover that to be a Vice, which a nearer Approach might have put upon him under other Colours.

Thus necessary is the Duty of Humiliation in Relation to our selves, and the Advantage of it here must arise wholly from the Afflictive Part of it, for if we will be Christs we must Crucify the Flesh with its Affections and Lusts as St. *Paul* tells us in an Elegant and Expressive Metaphor, for the Punishment of Crucifixion was by the Ancient Romans appropriated to their Slaves, and then chiefly when they were Rebellious or Disobedient, which is the very Case of that struggle between the Flesh and the Spirit.

Thus St *James* ch. 4. v. 1. From whence come Wars and Fightings among you? Come they not hence even from your Lusts, that War in your Members. Now this War is an open Rebellion, for as the whole Sublunary World, was submitted to the Authority of the only Rational Creature Man. So likewise was the Government of himself committed to the Power of that Faculty, which alone is capable of Rule and Government, as being that only which can Judge and Determine, between Convenient and Inconvenient

venient, between Good and Evil. The other Faculties of Man therefore must by the End and Design of their Creation be intended for the subordinate Service and Ministry of this.

When we find therefore the Seat of Empire chang'd, and *Sin reigning in our Mortal Body*, when *the Law of the Members has so successfully manag'd war against the Law of the Mind*, as to *bring it into captivity to the Law of Sin*, we may then, if we can reflect, easily discover a great Disorder in our Nature. The Mind may still pretend to the Freedom of its Will, but Captives must obey their Masters, and this, as most Rebel-lions do when prosperous, proves an insupportable Tyranny.

Under this Condition we have no other Method left to retrieve our selves by, but only as 'tis story'd of some of old, to march against our Usurping Slaves with Whips, and if no Assaults can force them, if no Terms of Capitulation will oblige them to surrender, there is no other way left but to starve the Enemy.

And this indeed is the only End and Design of those severer Acts of Mortification, to keep under that Body of Sin, which is thus apt to grow rebellious, and bring it into subjection: For if *Ishurun wax fat he will kick if he be cover'd with Fatness he will forsake the God that made him, and lightly esteem the Rock of his Salvation*, and therefore he must be burnt with Hunger, as we find it Deut. xxxii. 24. The

The Duty of Fasting has been call'd by some *The Life of Angels*, and the Reason, I suppose, is, because it puts us upon those Sublime Contemplations, which are the continual Employment of those Glorious Beings, and does in some measure even spiritualize the Body; for it makes it become what it ought to be, a just Assistant to the Soul: And when both of them move in that regular and uniform Order, which was design'd them by their Creator, they raise such a beautiful Fabrick as is indeed fit to be the Temple of the *Holy Ghost*: And when we are provided of such a Guest, we may reasonably think our selves secure against all the Assaults of Sin, the Provocations of it, or the Judgments for it. But thus much of the Necessity and Advantage of the Duty of Humiliation in general, proceed we next to consider,

Secondly, The particular End and Reasons for our Exercise of it at this time.

It is the Apostles Exhortation that *Prayers and Supplications be made for all Men, especially for those that are in Authority, that under them we may lead quiet and peaceable Lives, in all Godliness and Honesty*. And we are this Day call'd upon to assist our most Religious and Gracious Sovereign in Her Supplications to the God of Peace, that since it hath pleas'd the Divine Providence to give such wonderful Successes to Her Majesty's

jeſty's Arms, and thoſe of her Allies, as have reduc'd the Common Enemy to the Condition of deſiring Peace; we may ſo make our Peace with Heaven, by the Sincerity of our Humiliation for all our paſt Offences, that we may reaſonably hope for the Continuance of the ſame Providential Bleſſings both upon her Arms and Councils, till they iſſue in a Laſting and Honourable Peace.

Peace, Unity, and Concord, are ſuch Bleſſings to a Nation, that where they are, there cannot well be any thing wanting to the compleat Happineſs of the Publick; they are the daily Subject of our Publick Prayers, and ought conſequently to be the common Endeavour of us all, if we would *love Life, if we would ſee Good Days, we muſt ſeek Peace and enſue it.*

This is the Character of the Good Man in the Text, and the Expreſſion is ſtrong and forcible, for the Word *Διωξεν* here us'd has a double Import, it ſignifies both to purſue and perſecute, and ſeems to intimate that the Purſuit of ſuch a Bleſſing as Peace is, may be ſufficient to juſtify even ſome kind of Violence for the Accompliſhment of it.

'Tis true indeed a Juſt and Honourable War, ſuch as we are at preſent engag'd in, is not Evil in it ſelf, and therefore not to be accounted amongſt thoſe Judgments, which by our ſincere Humiliation we are to deprecate and avert. This is what
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our Enemies have to fear, whose ambitious and injurious Encroachments have given us the Honourable Occasion of justly vindicating the injur'd Liberties of Mankind.

For such is the Prerogative of Sovereign Princes, that having no Superior upon Earth, no common Bar of Justice here, to decide and determine the Disputes and Quarrels which may arise amongst them; the Sword alone, as being a kind of Appeal to the God of Hosts, for the Justice of their Cause, is the only Court of Equity they can have. And this makes the Blood and Rapine of War, not only necessary for the Soldier but his Duty too, in defence of the Honour of his Prince and Country.

This is the Cause we are engag'd in, and I doubt not, 'tis the Justice of it join'd with the Exemplary Piety of our Sovereign, that has given us so many fair Occasions of being thankful for our great Successes in it. But yet how Honourable soever a Just War may be, a long protracted War, though it rests upon never so just a Basis, may be well accounted a very severe Calamity to a Nation. For the necessary Expence both of Blood and Treasure requir'd in One Year for the Support of such an Universal and Extensive War, is more than can be naturally repair'd in the compass of Many; and therefore if every Year brings its Impoverishment along with it, the Pro-

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traction of it for many Years, must necessarily improve the Gradual Decay into Utter Ruin.

This ought to put us in mind of that Wise Parable in the Gospel, *Luke xiv. 31. What King going to make war against another King, sitteth not down first and consulteth, whether he be able with Ten Thousand, to meet him that cometh against him with Twenty Thousand. Or else while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an Embassy and desireth Conditions of Peace.*

I would not be thought to offer this in derogation to, either the Justice of our Cause, or the Strength and Wealth of our Country: The cheerful and early Duty this Honourable Body have already paid their Sovereign, forbid the Thought of it. The Enemy has found, and if he continues so, may still find the Weight and Force of both. And therefore the Embassadors are sent by Him.

When therefore we have the Honourable Opportunity of accepting Terms, of giving Peace, we may seem to neglect the Great Designs of Providence for our good, if we do not honestly and sincerely join our Prayers and Supplications for a Blessing upon those Councils which must remove from us the Calamities of War, and restore to us the Blessings of Peace.

The Difference between them is confess'd on all hands, the Calamity of War is what we have long groan'd under, and is now become such a Burthen

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then to us, that even Late Posterity will find the Pressure of it. Peace alone is the only Sovereign Remedy that can cure the Evil, nor will that it self be able to surmount the Chronical Malignity, unless it be both Honourable and Lasting.

Since therefore we are this Day call'd upon to make our peace with Heaven, in order to beg a Blessing upon Her Majesty's Consultations for this universally desir'd Peace upon Earth; let the Duty of the Day answer the Design of it; let our Humiliation be so honest and sincere, as to correct in us whatever we have thus occasion to be humbled for. Let us subdue those Lusts which war in our Members, and cause Wars and Fightings among our selves. Let all Divisions and reproachful Discriminations of Parties cease among us. Let us not fast for Strife and Contention, and then our United Prayers will ascend to Heaven with greater Force. We may then the more reasonably expect that *the God of Peace* will hear and assist us, and scatter *those*, if any such there be, *who delight in War*.

May we then so perform the present Duty, that the *God of Peace* may accept it at our hands, may He so bless both Her Majesty's Arms and Councils, with those of her Allies;
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that the Success of them may finally end in a Lasting and Honourable Peace. May He please to grant our Gracious Sovereign many *good Days* of Lasting Peace and Honour here, and may He late reward her Piety with Everlasting Peace hereafter.

FINIS.
